



MEETING SUMMARY

November 21, 2003

A regular public meeting of the New Jersey State Interagency Coordinating Council was held on Friday, November 21, 2003, at the Medical Society of New Jersey headquarters in Lawrenceville, New Jersey. The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by William Agress, Chair, who declared a quorum present.

ATTENDANCE – Attachment #1

WELCOME/CHAIR'S REPORT – William Agress

1. The Chair *welcomed those present*, noting especially the large number of public members (including three parents). At his request, *SICC members and public members introduced themselves* and their connection with early intervention.
2. The Chair reported on his October 23rd *meeting with the Governor's Director of Appointments*, Shawn Laurenti. Discussed were the *five SICC vacancies* representing: parent, legislative, Medicaid, service provider, Head Start. To maintain a geographical balance, it was suggested that the parent representative come from northern New Jersey. Ms. Laurenti gave assurance that the Governor would make the appointments at the earliest possible time.
3. The Chair made reference to the *summary of correspondence since the 5/23/03 meeting* (distributed/attached to file copy of minutes).
4. The Chair formally announced *two resignations from the SICC*: Rose Annussek, who has had a change in employment (letter attached to correspondence summary); and *Annette Conklin*, who is no longer employed as Unit Coordinator for Burlington County. The Chair expressed the Council's special gratitude to Ms. Annussek for her long and dedicated service to the SICC (since 1997), during which she chaired the first Interagency Committee. He urged her continued participation in the SICC.
5. The Chair announced *two new appointments*: Mary Jo Tivenan-Macintosh as chair of the Interagency Committee, and Bonnie Bogdanoff as co-chair (with Jennifer DeMauro) of the Administrative Committee.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Council unanimously approved the following minutes:

- * July 25, 2003 – upon motion by Dr. Holahan, seconded by Ms. DeMauro.
- * September 26, 2003 – upon motion by Gerald Kitzhoffer, seconded by Mary Lotze.

SICC COMMITTEES

1. **Systems Definition/Communication** – Toni Spiotta, Chair

The committee met earlier this morning and reported progress on (1) creating an *SICC website* to be connected with NJEIS website; and (2) *orientation manual* for new Council members.

2. **Family Support** – Lauren Agoratus and Joseph Holahan, M.D., Co-Chairs

Ms. Agoratus reviewed the minutes of a 9/18/03 *conference call* (distributed/attached to minutes of meeting). She reported on a *meeting held earlier this morning* (Attachment #2). Dr. Holahan is working with the AAP/NJ to determine the most effective method of distributing the *Child Find posters*, which are now available in Spanish. He reported on the successful progress of the *Physician Training in Early Intervention project*. Between now and June 2004, a training seminar will be held in each of the state's four regions, with a four-member team consisting of at least one in each of the following categories: pediatrician, family practitioner, parent whose child is in early intervention and an early intervention representative from the State.

3. **Interagency** – Mary Jo Tivenan-Macintosh, Chair

As the new chair, Ms. Tivenan-Macintosh reported on a meeting earlier this morning during which the committee *reviewed its goals and evaluated current projects*. There has been ongoing issues about moving forward to identify a family/child with autism for its case study pilot. The committee will reassess this project to determine a future direction, if any.

4. **Administration** – Jennifer DeMauro, Co-Chair

A. The committee, which met earlier this morning, is working on the *Early Intervention in New Jersey 2003 Annual Report*. Because the format will be the same as 2002, Ms. DeMauro urged Council members to review last year's report and send to her by January 1, 2004, their ideas/comments/suggestions for improving the 2003 report. Of special importance is receiving data from the Lead Agency at the earliest possible time. Terry Harrison will review the report for technical accuracy; Mary Lotze, for literary accuracy. Ms. DeMauro anticipates that a draft will be available at the January 23rd SICC meeting. Ms. Harrison reported that the December 1, 2003 data will not be available until March-April 2004.

B. Ms. DeMauro reviewed *two policy statements* (distributed/attached to file copy of minutes) whose intents were previously approved by the Council. Both statements were ***unanimously approved by the Council*** – upon motion by Ms. Spiotta, seconded by Ms. Agoratus.:

Parent Member Stipend (clarification)

Liaison to New Jersey Early Intervention System Committees and Task Forces (format)

C. **Budget Ad Hoc** – Susan Richmond, Chair

Ms. Richmond discussed the *New Jersey Budget Cycle Fiscal Year 2004-2005* (distributed/attached to file copy of minutes). She reported that discussions with the Lead Agency reveal budget issues this year are not much different from last year; the Catastrophic Illness Fund was a one-time deal; issues of investigating insurance agencies, Medicaid waivers and reimbursement are ongoing. Miss Richmond will develop a position paper, share it with her committee and report back to the Council.

5. **Fuller Vision of “Family Support Concept” Ad Hoc** – Susan Richmond, Chair

The committee -- created at the request of the Part C Steering Committee for the *SICC to sponsor and organize a one-day forum* to build a fuller vision of “family support concept” around the State – had one meeting. A draft was circulated among committee members, with feedback to Ms. Richmond. Another meeting has been scheduled for December 9th, at which REIC family coordinators will be present. Others who have already done research in this area were encouraged to forward the information/data to Ms. Richmond

LEAD AGENCY- DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES

Celeste Andriot Wood, Assistant Commissioner, and Terry Harrison, Part C Coordinator

Ms. Wood and Ms. Harrison reported on the following:

- * There are more stringent rules in *Medicaid changes*, including a rate change which could reduce income from that source; anticipate Medicaid billing for early intervention in future.
- * New Jersey is facing *another year of deficits*. While not aware at this time what the Governor’s proposed 2005 budget will be, it is fairly certain there will be at least a continuation of the early intervention budget to maintain its base. More information will be available in late January or early February 2004.
- * The *Procedural Safeguards* position has been reclassified to require an attorney. Interviews are scheduled during the month of November, and a replacement is targeted for January 2004.
- * *Steering Committee* met October 29th. The Improvement Plan will be updated and forwarded to OSEP by January 2004
- * The Federal OSEP *Annual Performance Report* requires more accountability for measuring outcomes. The format has been approved and is pending OMB approval.
- * Agencies that chose to *continue grants July 1* have received letters to proceed with enrollment under a letter of agreement.

Ms. Wood reported that *written comments for the hearings* on the proposed changes in the Early Intervention System will be accepted through November 28th. To date, there were three public hearings attended by 166 individuals; 61 oral presentations and 50 written testimony. *Major issues at the hearings were:*

- * Maintain the current cost share system and continue two hours per week at public expense.
- * Family cost share beginning at 150% FLP is too low to begin cost sharing.
- * Rates at family higher end too high; concern about confidentiality of family finances.
- * What constitutes extraordinary means or circumstances when looking at deductions on adjusted gross income.
- * Families may opt out of the Early Intervention System.

Many attested that early intervention provided valued service. The Lead Agency will compile a summary of the testimony (written and oral, as well as notes taken at the hearings); categorize various areas of concern; prepare a continuum of options and policy choices to address these concerns; address the impact statement of changes, both positive and negative. The Lead Agency will ultimately present recommendations to the NJDHSS Commissioner. Working within a short time frame, the Lead Agency hopes for a rapid decision based on the current budget year. It seems unlikely that policy changes will be in place by January 1, 2004. The Central Finance System has been delayed until some time in the first quarter of 2004. The RFP bid process closed on 11/19/03.

Distributed (attached to file copy of minutes) were two *fact sheets* from the Lead Agency: *What Do The Proposed Changes Mean to Families* and *Did You Know?*

IDEA POLICY CHANGES/PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Chair reminded the Council that one of the primary functions of the SICC is to advise and assist the Lead Agency in providing early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in the performance of its responsibilities. With Council's concurrence, the Chair felt it appropriate that the SICC *discuss the major concerns expressed at the public hearings*. The Chair encouraged all those present to participate in the discussion. Thus did the Council and public members discuss at length the chief issue at all the hearings: cost share. Concerns were voiced on possible outcomes -- from families on the lower end opting out of the system to families on the higher end opting for private services. The discussion resulted in the following ***recommendations*** to the Lead Agency – upon motion by Ms. Spiotta, seconded by Ms. Agoratus (*Ms. Wood abstained in both instances*):

1. **That the percent of Federal poverty level be retained at 350% in determining family financial participation.**
2. **That Family support services not be billed to families.**

The Family Support Vision Ad Hoc Committee was asked to prepare recommendation(s) on how “family support” should be defined, and report back to the Council at its January 23rd meeting.

REIC UPDATE – Susan Marcario

At a follow-up mini retreat, 66 *strategies/activities* were identified through group brainstorming at the SICC/REIC 9/26/03 joint meeting to help families, providers and the Early Intervention System through this time of change (distributed/attached to file copy of minutes). The strategies/activities were grouped into specific categories: (1) to assist families, (2) to assist providers, (3) to assist other stakeholders, (4) written information needed, (5) REIC activities, (6) Lead Agency and SICC activities, (7) Administrators/Providers activities. The strategies were presented in a table with three columns: (1) ideas, (2) what is being done to implement the strategies, (3) what remains to be done. SICC and REIC board members were asked to check the top ten strategies they identified as most important and to indicate which of the top ten activities they would work on. The worksheets were to be completed and sent by January 1, 2004, to Ms. Marcario, who would tally the priority areas for presentation to the SICC at its January 23rd meeting

As a follow up to the joint meeting, the following **recommendations** were offered and unanimously adopted – upon motion by Ms. Spiotta, seconded by Ms. Lotze:

1. ***Each REIC board designate a member to attend each SICC meeting; the SICC designate a member to attend each REIC meeting; each entity to determine how assignments are made and feedback from meetings processed.***
2. ***Annually, the SICC and REIC boards meet to create a joint plan, with meeting location in central New Jersey.***
3. ***Annually (beginning Spring 2004), a meeting be held in each region that is jointly planned by the region and the SICC, with provider and family participation; the cost to be shared by the region and the SICC.***
The Spring 2004 meeting to focus on implementation of the system changes, to continue providing support for families and providers through the change process.

NEW BUSINESS

The Chair and Vice-Chair reported on their attendance at the (1) *National Interagency Coordinating Council* meeting held November 2, 2003 in Washington, D.C., including workshops in which they participated; and (2) *OSEP/National Early Childhood Conference* held November 3-5, 2003 in Washington, D.C., also attended by the REIC directors and NJDHSS staff. One of the especially impressive presentations will be mailed (attached to file copy of minutes) to Council members: *Leaving Too Many Children Behind...A Demographer's View on the Neglect of America's Youngest Children...* by Harold L. Hodgkinson.

ADJOURNMENT – 1:05 p.m.

APPROVED – 1/23/04